

# **COLORADO WILDERNESS ACT OF 2001**

## **U.S. REPRESENTATIVE DIANA DEGETTE**

### **MARCH 2001**

#### **GENERAL FACTS:**

- Colorado Wilderness Act of 2001 designates 46 pristine areas across Colorado which total 1.35 million acres as protected wilderness areas. Approximately, 1 million acres are currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 312,000 acres are managed by the United States Forest Service. The remaining acres are state or private lands.
- Colorado Wilderness Act of 2001 has been revised with 18 amended areas. These changes were a result of additional fieldwork by Colorado citizens, input from interested parties, or to establish more manageable boundaries. With these changes and the removal of Gunnison Gorge and Black Canyons, which were designated as wilderness in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2001 is about 37,000 acres smaller than the legislation originally introduced in 1999.

#### **Examples of Boundary Changes:**

- 1,870 acres were subtracted from the proposed Dolores River Wilderness to remove a previously unmaintained road on Davis Mesa.
- Approximately 200 acres were removed from the proposed Brown's Canyon Wilderness, at the request of local commercial river outfitters, to provide room for public restroom facilities to service this popular rafting route.
- 277 acres of land recently acquired by the BLM were added to the proposed Little Bookcliffs Wilderness.
- 11,795 acres were added to the proposed Deep Creek Wilderness to establish a more manageable boundary defined by roads on the mesa top, rather than the canyon's edge.
- The Colorado Wilderness Act of 2001 will protect 2% of Colorado's entire land base. This legislation does NOT affect 85% of the lands managed by the BLM, which are open to oil and gas drilling, mining, off-road vehicle use and other development activities. The legislation honors all existing water rights and mining claims and allows existing livestock grazing to continue.
- The Colorado Wilderness Act preserves critical mid-elevation wilderness in Colorado, which are not well represented in the National Wilderness Preservation system. Currently, nearly all existing wilderness in Colorado is above 9,000 feet, even though mid-elevation wilderness is essential for wildlife and winter range.
- This legislation builds on strong public support for protecting wilderness areas in Colorado. Already, more than 260 businesses and organizations, including hunting, commercial rafting, outdoor retail, conservation organizations, and senior citizens groups have endorsed the legislation. In addition, ten Colorado counties and municipalities with wilderness areas have expressed their support for wilderness.
- Rep. DeGette has conducted numerous wilderness-related meetings with citizens, interest groups, and local government officials since she first introduced wilderness legislation in 1999.